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INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1992
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOV PTBS ODIP IN
SUBJECT: PONDICHERRY RENAMED PUDUCHERRY

¶1. (U) The Government of India has changed the name of Pondicherry
to Puducherry, its pre-colonial native name, with effect from
October 1. A set of former French colonies in South India,
Puducherry is one of India's six Union Territories, i.e., quasi
states with less legislative powers and directly ruled by GOI.
Local political parties unanimously supported the rechristening but
some citizens wonder whether the political exercise is worth the
loss of the brand name Pondicherry. In view of the GOI
notification, Post recommends that the new name Puducherry be used
in future USG communication. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) Based on an Act passed in both houses of the Indian
Parliament in August, The Ministry of Home Affairs, GOI, notified
that the Union Territory of Pondicherry will be known as Puducherry
from October 1, 2006. Puducherry, meaning "new village," was the
local name of the location before colonial French made it
Pondicherry. It is said that the name Pondicherry was actually the
result of a spelling mistake by an early scribe: the original French
spelling was "Poudichery" but at some point, some scribe wrote "n"
in place of "u" and the name stuck.

¶3. (U) Puducherry consists of four small former French enclaves on
the South India coast: Puducherry and Karaikal in Tamil Nadu, Yanam
in Andhra Pradesh and Mahe in Kerala. Puducherry and Karaikal are by
far the larger ones. The territory has a total area of 492 sq. km.
and a population of 900,000. Since the French East India Company
set up a trading post in Puducherry in 1673, the area generally had
remained under French control until 1954 when it was handed over to
the Republic of India.

¶4. (U) As in the case of Chennai, which was Madras prior to 1996,
all local political parties welcome the name change, the result of
decades old resolutions passed by the erstwhile Pondicherry
Assembly. A few citizens, however, wonder if the exercise would do
any good to the region that has a small but growing tourism
industry.

¶5. (U) COMMENT: Post recommends that the new name Puducherry be used
in future USG communication and records. END COMMENT.

HOPPER